The War Paper for Women

VOTES FOR WOMEN

OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE UNITED SUFFRAGISTS

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DEDICATION

To the brave women who to-day are fighting for freedom: to the noble women who all down the ages kept the flag flying and looked forward to this day without seeing it: to all women all over the world, of whatever race, or creed, or calling, whether they be with us or against us in this fight, we dedicate this paper.

THE OUTLOOK

The Electoral Reform Bill is still being drafted as we go to press, and neither its terms nor the extent of the responsibility that the Government intend to assume for its passage through Parliament are known to us. Some discussion on the matter took place in the House of Commons on April 18, during the debate on the Committee stage of the Bill for the prolongation of Parliament; and a disquieting note from the Political Correspondent of the *Times*, appearing in that paper on April 24, seems to indicate that the Woman Suffrage clauses will not have Government protection. We deal in our leading article on page 260 with all these points.

The Danger of Reform

The necessity for women's enfranchisement was never greater than at the present moment, when all kinds of constructive schemes are on foot, probably engendered both by a growing sense of an impending cessation of hostilities and by the new spirit of hope and reform created by the Russian Revolution. Promising as all this is, from the point of view of reconstruction, we have still to remember that women are as yet unenfranchised, and that schemes of reform affecting an unenfranchised section of the community are sometimes fraught with grave dangers to that section. A case in point is the Criminal Law Amendment Bill, the Report stage of which is being taken in the House of Commons as these words are written.

The Criminal Law Amendment Bill

Owing very largely to the steady opposition of organized women, some of the more obnoxious features of the Bill as originally drafted were dropped out of it in the Committee stage. As amended in Committee, Clauses 1 and 2 came to include the most valuable provisions in the whole measure; the first raising the age of consent to indecency from 13 to 16, both for boys and girls, while the second abolishes as a line of defence in charges of criminal assault the "reasonable cause to believe" that a girl was over 16 when assaulted. These are the good Clauses of the Bill; and if the measure passes into law with these unaltered, and if a further provision can be secured raising the age of consent at least to 17—a proposal made by Mr. W. H. Dickinson in Committee, but rejected—a step forward will certainly have been taken in the interests of our girls and boys. But unfortunately, at the last sitting of the Standing Committee, an extraordinarily unwise proposition was embodied in a new Clause 3, which in effect gives power to any magistrate to order girls under 18 to be detained for as much as three years in a State "Home," if summarily convicted of "loitering or importuning passengers for the purposes of prostitution or solicitation, or any offence of a like nature," or of "wandering in the public streets or public highway, and behaving in a riotous or indecent manner."

"The Promotion of Blackmail"

The dangers to women of such panic legislation are obvious. It hands girls—not their men associates—over to a form of imprisonment, and probably to some kind of "treatment" involving compulsory examination, on the evidence of a single policeman. "It is difficult to imagine a power more liable than this to grave abuse," comments the *Manchester Guardian*; while the *Daily News*, in a leading article called "The Promotion of Blackmail," speaks of this "indefensible clause," and adds:—

> The possibilities of blackmail such a provision introduces are limitless, and no girl walking out alone after dark will be safe if the clause becomes law.

Almost every organized body of women has warmly condemned this proposal, and a large meeting, organized by the Women's Freedom League in the Central Hall, Westminster, on April 16, called for its withdrawal. We hope and think it will not now become law, and we should not dwell upon it at such length here but for the fact that it proves the danger of well-intentioned legislation when forced upon a section of the community that is unrepresented in Parliament. For we believe it was at the instigation of a women's committee by no means representative of all classes of women, and certainly not of women of advanced thought, that the Clause was framed and also that so good a friend of the women's cause as Mr. W. H. Dickinson consented to champion it in public; and we should like to assure its promoters that we fully recognize the difficulties of the situation it was framed to meet, though we emphatically condemn such attempts to bring about by the penalisation of women alone what will ultimately be secured only by a change of outlook in the whole people, men and women, based on the recognition of their equality.

Education Reform

Another important reform, on which it is essential that the opinion of women should be carefully consulted, has been foreshadowed in an interesting speech in the House of Commons by Mr. Fisher. We confess that, since for the first time we have a Minister at the Education Office who knows more of education than of politics, we should prefer to base our appreciation of his maiden speech on the freshness of its point of view rather than, as many have done, on his cleverness in learning the Parliamentary manner of speaking. But that is a small point beside the inspiring fact of his insistence on great educational ideals, intellectual and æsthetic, and his recognition of our national stupidity in neglecting to encourage the magnificent material that lies buried in our elementary schools. Had his full scheme been unfolded, we might have had more to say on this aspect of the question. What he revealed of the details of his plan referred only to the first two years of its working; and these hardly come up to the high standard aimed at in his speech, though, on the other hand, they contain proposals involving the mother and the home in such a way as to place women on their guard at once.

The Child Worker and the Child Scholar

The raising of the school age to 14, and the abolition of exemptions below that age, do not seem very revolutionary changes to those who think that the worker's child should have as good a chance as the rich man's child of developing his or her mind and body to their fullest extent. This mild reform, however, would put an end to the pernicious system of half-time (of which we know little in London), and would prevent the farmer from obtaining cheap labour at the expense of the child's education. How real a scandal this latter evil is becoming can be gathered from a statement made at the Teachers' Conference the other day, to the effect that 800 Hampshire boys aged 12 had passed the labour examination and were now exempt from school for agricultural work. Yet, although Mr. Fisher's proposed changes do not go very far towards the great goal at which he and all true reformers aim, they go far enough to forebode a very real suffering in the home, and especially to the mother, out of whose food the extra money will inevitably have to be saved to replace the wages that would otherwise be earned by the children. We are emphatically opposed to child labour; but we do see, as we hope Mr. Fisher does, that it cannot be abolished, even up to the age of 14, without some accompanying system of compensation to the home.

Will the Commons Drag Back the Lords?

There is a good chance that the Government will agree to the women's memorial asking them to grant facilities for Lord Buckmaster's Bill. As is well known, this Bill for admitting women to the legal profession as solicitors passed through the House of Lords without a division. Even Lord Curzon did not marshal against it one of the little squad of fifteen reasons with which he used to take the field against Woman Suffrage. The House of Commons may lag behind Russia, but it will be a portent if it lags behind the Lords. By one of the peculiar contradictions which sometimes affect great minds, even those distinguished opponents of ours, Mrs. Humphry Ward and Miss Gladys Pott, have signed the memorial, so that no excuse is left for the most narrow-minded Member of Parliament to cling to the legislation of the Middle Ages. For he will find few even among the enemies of progress to bear him company.

The Law and Finer Feelings

A ludicrous case in Dublin comes just in time to illustrate the absurdity of excluding women from the law. Miss Georgina Frost petitioned in the Chancery Division to maintain her right as elected clerk of the Petty Sessions at a town in County Clare. Her father had been clerk; during his illness, for five years, she had discharged the duties of the office; and the local justices, to their great credit, had elected her as his successor. By an Early Victorian Act the Lord Lieutenant has the power to discontinue such offices, and he discontinued this one. Whereupon Miss Frost appealed, and "the Crown" sent someone to defend its action against her. The Crown's chief argument was that it might become Miss Frost's duty "to take depositions in criminal cases, which would be unpleasant for her and everyone concerned." Amazing as it must seem, Mr. Justice Barton supported this view. He had advanced far enough to admit that the disqualification of women no longer rested upon any presumed inferiority of intellect or discretion. "There are few people nowadays," he added, "who would allege any such inferiority." We thank him much for that. "But," he continued, "the disqualification nominally rested upon considerations of decorum, and upon the unfitness of certain painful and exacting duties in relation to the finer qualities of women." O Chivalry, what nonsense is committed in thy name!

"Bonus, Bona, Bonum!"

We demand that, as in that old Latin adjective, the feminine should be on the same line with the masculine, and the solid neuter of material good should be within touch of both, or rather, nearer the feminine for choice. In nearly all households, it is the woman who is most concerned about that material good, its supply and its price, and in nearly all it is the woman who suffers first when the supply falls short and prices rise. Yet it is always the woman—the woman to whom a little money more or less makes such a vital difference—it is the woman who is given about half the "bonus" of a man, when she gets any "bonus" at all. Case after case has occurred within the last week or two. Speaking of the railwaymen's demand for increased war bonus, the *Times* reports: "The settlement reached was on a basis of a 5s. increase all round, and 2s. 6d. for women above 18 and boys." Observe the phrase "all round," which none the less excludes all women. Similarly, the Lancashire and Cheshire Corporations and private tramway companies have "awarded" a war bonus of 3s. 6d. to women conductors, trolly girls, and cleaners over 18, and appear quite proud of their generosity. For men doing exactly the same work the war bonus is 6s. 6d. The Blackburn Corporation has given its women employees the same bonus as the men, but not a single other authority in Lancashire has followed that just example. The Board of Trade tells us that food has now gone up 94 per cent. since the beginning of the war, and living in general 65 per cent. When food is nearly double, do women want about half the money that men get? If so, a glorious time is coming for the sweater and the breakers of Trade Unions.

Wages and Salaries

But it is not, of course, only with regard to the war bonus that this sex inequality is obvious. As the *New Statesman* said recently:—

> Will it be believed that, even now, after two years' delay, and in the face of the present crisis, there are thousands of adult women doing war work on Government contracts at much less than £1 per week? The Ministry of Munitions professes to have enacted a "minimum" wage; but, to this day, it refuses to make the order universal. Thus the so-called minimum is not a minimum.

Similarly, both Mr. Fisher's speech on education reform and many utterances of the Teachers' Conference held in London in April reveal the gross under-payment of women in the teaching profession. Badly as men teachers are paid, women teachers are paid even worse, instances having been given at the Conference of headmistresses of thirty years' standing earning only £70 a year or less. We are glad that the National Federation of Women Teachers, at a subsequent conference, passed a resolution repudiating the action of the N.U.T. in attempting to make compulsory a scale of salaries which differentiate against women. No reform of an educational system will be of any value as long as the inferiority of status of the women teachers is maintained in their lower remuneration.

A Roll of Dishonour

Three terrible records of life and death among the civilian population of this country were issued during April. In the annual Report of the Registrar-General for 1915, it was stated that the infant mortality rate was 110 per 1,000 births—5 per 1,000 above the rate in 1914, but below the average of the years 1905-1914. Dr. Arthur Newsholme, in another report, stated that no fewer than 575,078 children under the age of five died in England and Wales during the years 1911-1914, a figure representing more than a quarter of the total deaths at all ages. The third document was a report of a committee of Unionist M.P.'s, whose view of the present state of the nation's health may be summed up in their opinion that our health system constitutes "a guarantee of practical waste and efficiency." We do not, however, need fresh evidence of these and other crying evils, such as, for instance, that 11,000 children die annually of measles, *but mostly in the working classes*, which shows that bad housing and bad conditions are the real scourge, not measles. What is of importance is that at last the country and the authorities seem to be waking up to a sense of what our "Roll of Dishonour" means.

A Ministry of Health

Lord Rhondda's scheme for a Ministry of Health, whether it comes to anything or not, at least shows that the seriousness of the health question has at last been realised. The Insurance Committees Deputation that waited upon the President of the Local Government Board, a week or two ago, urged the immense importance of the housing problem in relation to the whole subject. It was pointed out that the applications for insurance benefits from districts where bad housing conditions prevail are greatly in excess of those coming from better-built areas, and that in Durham, for example, 250,000 people are living in overcrowded houses. At the same interview Mr. Hayes Fisher admitted that after the war we shall have a shortage of half-a-million houses; but that if 30 millions of money could be voted for the purpose by Parliament we should get a great return in the improved health of the nation. Perhaps, having grown used by that time to spending six millions a day on war, we shall not quibble over spending five times that sum, for once, in saving life.

Do Not Forget
FRIDAY, MAY 11, at 8 p.m.,
when
Mrs. PETHICK LAWRENCE
will Speak on
"The Failure of Repression,"
in the
ESSEX SMALL HALL (Essex St., Strand, W.C.).
Chair:
Mr. LAURENCE HOUSMAN.
ADMISSION FREE.
Particulars and Handbills from Miss BREWSTER, United Suffragists, 27, Chancery Lane, W.C. 2.

Items of Interest

The returns for April show that in Glasgow 250 women are acting as tram drivers, 1,293 as conductors, 470 as car cleaners, 193 as clerks, and 60 as storekeepers and wood-workers. It is said that the women-drivers are cool and competent, and have fewer accidents than the men drivers.

The Committee that has been appointed by the First Lord of Admiralty to investigate the charges made against Osborne from the point of view of health is to include women members.

The Suffrage amendment has passed both Houses of the Oklahoma Legislature, and will go to the Referendum of the voters in November, 1918.

Australian nurses and munition workers in this country, as well as members of the Australian military and naval forces in Great Britain and France, will be given an opportunity of voting in the forthcoming Australian Federal election.

ELECTORAL REFORM BILL—IMPORTANT

As we go to press the announcement is made by Lord Curzon in the House of Lords that although the Government will take charge of the Electoral Reform Bill in both Houses, members will be free to vote as they please on the clauses relating to Woman Suffrage and Proportional Representation. Will our readers bear this in mind in reading our note on the preceding page and our leading article on page 260?

MRS. HARLEY'S FUNERAL

We have received a full account of the funeral of Mrs. Harley, of which we spoke in our last issue, from a member of the staff of the Scottish Women's Hospitals in Salonika. Want of space unfortunately prevents our publishing it in full; but the following extracts will interest our readers:

"Accorded full military honours by the British Commander-in-Chief, no General in the Army could have been shown more respect than Mrs. Harley. Through rows of British soldiers standing motionless, with heads bowed on their rifles, passed the procession, the coffin borne on a carriage and covered with the British, French and Serbian flags, and bearing one wreath from her daughters. Behind followed Sister Harley and her sister, the Commander-in-Chief, Prince George of Serbia, the British Admirals, representatives of the Allied Armies, and the staff of the Scottish Women's Hospital, together with an enormous number of officers from all the Armies.

"A long row of Serbian soldiers carried the wreaths with their beautiful streaming coloured ribbons. The bands of various regiments played the funeral marches as the procession slowly wended its way down to the military cemetery, whilst round about was a vast concourse of people looking on, filled with amazement at the wonderful respect shown to a woman . . . .

"To those who took part in the funeral and its arrangements, it seemed a fitting end, and one to be most desired by Mrs. Harley herself. She passed over to the West 'on active service' to the last moment in the midst of the guns, whose sound she had heard and never feared since the beginning of the war.

"Mrs. Harley's funeral was the grandest triumph of her life work spent in the cause of women. It was an evidence of the degree of respect in which she and her work was held by all the Armies. In gazing at that long procession, and the closing of that grave, one's feelings of regret and admiration were mingled with those of envy, and many would have been willing to have exchanged their places for the glory which that grave contained."

John Stuart Mill Commemoration Meeting
AT THE
CENTRAL HALL, WESTMINSTER,
ON
MONDAY, MAY 21st at 7.30 p.m.
Speakers:
Dr. G. B. CLARK.
Mrs. FENWICK MILLER.
And others.
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NOTABLE CONVERTS TO WOMAN SUFFRAGE

An Ex-Cabinet Minister

Mr. Herbert Samuel, M.P., is reported in the *Daily News* (April 17th) to have given a correspondent in his constituency a statement of the reasons which led him to cast his vote in favour of the enfranchisement of women on the lines suggested in the Speaker's Report. Three years of war, he considers, have done as much to educate women in public affairs as a generation of peace, and the Suffrage movement itself has widened the horizon of women. Under the changed circumstances he regards Women's Suffrage as desirable.

A Peer

Though not declaring himself actually a convert to Woman Suffrage, Lord Sheffield makes a very important concession in this direction in a letter to the *Times* (April 4), in which, urging that the recommendations of the Speaker's Committee should be carried out as a whole, he says—

> Many of us who are not in favour of Woman Suffrage accept it as part of a comprehensive settlement.

A Scottish M.P.

Sir Henry Craik, M.P. for Glasgow and Aberdeen Universities, in a letter to a correspondent states that, although considering the present time inopportune for great electoral changes, he accepts the contrary decision of the House of Commons and will do all in his power "to curtail controversy." He continues:—

> With regard to Women's Suffrage, my position has always been quite clear. While I was fully prepared to vote for any scheme which aimed at securing equal justice and equal economic security for women, I was never persuaded that the Suffrage was necessary to secure this, and in other respects I had, and continue to have, grave doubts whether the grant of the vote was really in the interests of women, or whether a majority of them desired it.
>
> But if a substantial preponderance of opinion is in favour of granting the Suffrage, then I recognise that it is the duty of all of us, whatever our individual opinion, to do all we can to secure that the operation of the Suffrage shall be as satisfactory as possible, having regard to all the interests concerned.

CONFESSIONS OF FAITH

Other confessions of faith are being repeatedly made by Members of Parliament and others who have never opposed the enfranchisement of women. Mr. T. O. Jacobsen, M.P., for instance, told the annual meeting of the Hyde Division Liberal Association recently that women ought to have the vote, not simply because of their services during the war, but because in his belief it would be good for women, good for men, and good for the country.

A Journalist

Mr. Harold Spender, the well-known journalist and prospective Liberal candidate for Cambridge, said in the course of a speech at the Cambridge Liberal Club that he had always been a believer in Woman Suffrage, and he was delighted to see it coming by common consent.

A Churchman

On Good Friday, preaching at St. James's, Piccadilly, Dr. David, headmaster of Rugby, referred to the near prospect of Woman Suffrage, and remarked that many opponents have changed their views because they recognise that at the very centre of the movement lies a great passion for righteousness.

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JOINT SUFFRAGE MEETING

A very successful Joint Suffrage Meeting was held in the Central Hall, Westminster, on Saturday afternoon, April 20. It was organized by the Women's Freedom League, and several Societies, including the United Suffragists, took part in it. The following resolution was passed unanimously:—

> That this meeting cordially supports the Government in its decision to include the principle of Woman Suffrage in the Electoral Reform Bill, and at the same time calls upon the House of Commons to pass as wide a measure of woman suffrage as possible.

The Speeches

Mrs. Despard took the Chair, and dwelt on the interest of the present political situation, in which so much reconstruction is being planned, and said that women have a reasonable hope of winning their undeniable right to take part in it. Mr. W. H. Dickinson, M.P., who was the principal speaker, said very little about the proposals of the Speaker's Conference except to speak hopefully of the prospects of women's enfranchisement. He dealt wittily with the breakdown of the Anti-Suffrage opposition, and anticipated a time when the woman's vote will have helped to dissipate the evils of the party spirit.

Mrs. Swanwick (Women's International League) made a reasoned speech on representative government, showing that the encroachments of the power of the Executive upon the power of Parliament had begun before the war, because men did not realise or use even that amount of representative government that they possessed.

Miss Eva Gore-Booth (National Industrial and Professional Women's Suffrage Society) spoke on the industrial women's aspect of the question, and pleaded for their inclusion in the Suffrage proposals of the forthcoming Bill: and Miss Slieve McGowan (New Constitutional Society) dealt humorously and forcibly with the need for lowering the suggested age limit in those proposals.

Miss Evelyn Sharp (United Suffragists) spoke of the exclusion both of youth and industry from the proposals, as published, of the Speaker's Conference, but made the point that no age had been actually fixed by the Conference, and this still remained to be done. She compared the proposals with the wider view taken by new Russia of the need for youth in her counsels; and went on to say that British women were at all events going to be enfranchised at a great moment, and even if nothing better could be won than the Conference had recommended, this amount of enfranchisement would set their feet in the right road.

Mrs. Corner (Women's Freedom League) based her speech on the supposition that women already had won their votes, and dealt with the use that could be made of them, dwelling particularly on Child Labour.

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WOMEN AS SOLICITORS MEMORIAL

A Memorial, signed by influential and representative women, has been presented to Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law, welcoming "the endorsement given by the House of Lords to Lord Buckmaster's Solicitors (Qualification of Women) Bill, 1917, by passing without a division this measure to enable women to qualify and practise as solicitors in England and Wales."

The Memorial proceeds:—

> We know that we have behind us the united support of the organised women of the country, and we therefore urge that the Government will give time for, or itself adopt, Lord Buckmaster's Bill and give all facilities for its immediate passage through the House of Commons. We further hold that the need for the immediate passage of a corresponding measure for Scotland is equally urgent.

The signatories include several United Suffragists—Dr. Louisa Garrett Anderson, Mrs. Hertha Ayrton, M.I.E.E., Miss Evelyn Sharp, Miss May Sinclair, and Mrs. Olive Schreiner—as well as a noted anti-Suffragist in Mrs. Humphry Ward. Well-known Suffragists like Mrs. Fawcett, Miss Elizabeth Robins, Miss Maude Royden, are naturally to be found in the list; also industrial organizers, such as Miss Mary Macarthur, Miss Margaret Bondfield, Miss Esther Roper; County Councillors—Miss Margaret Ashton, Miss Susan Laurence, Miss Eleanor Rathbone; University women—Miss Clara Collet, Miss Jane Harrison—and many other women well known in various departments of public life.

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INDUSTRIAL WELFARE WORK

In view of the great influx into industry of women and girls, and their congestion in districts unprovided with suitable accommodation, special interest and importance attaches to the Conference that will be held all day on May 5, at the Toplady Hall, Whitefields, Tottenham Court Road, W., under the auspices of the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organizations (1, Victoria Street, S.W.1).

Miss Mary Macarthur will be in the Chair, and among the speakers will be Miss Margaret Bondfield, Mrs. Barton, Miss Hilda Cashmore, Mr. J. J. Mallon, Dr. Marion Phillips, Miss I. Sloan, and Mrs. Webb. The morning session will be devoted to a discussion on the Amendment of the Factory Acts, among suggested reforms being the following:—

a. The reduction of the working hours of all persons over eighteen to 48 hours, and of all all persons under 18 to 24 hours per week.

b. The abolition of night work for women and all young persons and its reduction for men with a view to its final abolition.

c. Further definitions and improvements in the standard with regard to sanitary requirements (including washing accommodation), dining, cloak and rest rooms, and further precautions against poisonous processes and other dangerous and unhealthy trades.

At the afternoon session, resolutions will be put regarding the provision of housing and canteens for the workers; and also with respect to the place of welfare work. Visitors will be admitted to the Conference at a fee of 2s. 6d. each.

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CORRESPONDENCE

To the Editor of VOTES FOR WOMEN.

Dear Madam,—"T. O'Meara" says, in her article in the February issue of VOTES FOR WOMEN, that not by penalties, fines, or imprisonment can the prostitution of women and girls be put down. Would she say the same about stealing, forging, libelling, poisoning, &c.? Also, does she not know that by raising the age of consent of young girls from nominally 16 to really 18, such girls could no longer be on sale in our streets, music-halls, and houses of ill-fame, nor could they throw themselves, or be thrown, at the soldiers; and that all this could be accomplished only by sending people to prison? Again, from an educational point of view, is it not understood by everyone that people are punished by the law solely because they have done wrong—in the case of the buyers of human beings in houses of ill-fame, one of the greatest wrongs possible?

Once more—and no reform can ever be greater than this!—to punish men who frequent houses of ill-fame, whether private or regulated by the different Christian Governments, is to abolish these houses. Then we could not possibly have the German war official brothels filled with French women and girls of all classes from the industrial region in and around Lille, nor the French official brothels, which are frequented by British soldiers, such brothels containing no doubt also French women and girls, but where from, or how obtained, we do not know.—Yours faithfully, F. K. POWELL.

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VICTIMISATION OF WOMEN TEACHERS

A correspondent writes:—

On December 11 last, the Cardiff City Council passed a resolution to the effect that it was undesirable that any person who was a conscientious objector to military service should continue in the pay of the council or of any committee thereof after December 31st, and that a committee consisting of the Lord Mayor and the chairmen of the various committees should be appointed to go into each individual case.

As a result of this resolution enquiries were made into the views of the Council's employees, *women as well as men*, and on March 14, the following report appeared in the local press:—

> "A meeting of the special committee re conscientious objectors was held at the City Hall, Cardiff, yesterday, the Deputy Lord Mayor presiding. The heads of the various departments reported as to the results of the questions which they had been instructed to obtain from each member of the staff with regard to their views on military service. It was reported that there were no conscientious objectors in any of the departments except the education department, but as in several instances only verbal questions had been put it was decided that each member of the staff be asked to reply in writing."

A number of the women teachers declined entirely to answer any questions regarding their private views on any matter, and they have consequently been asked to resign. As a correspondent to the *South Wales Daily News* points out: "Their offence is not that they are conscientious objectors, still less that they have abused their position as teachers to inculcate views distasteful to the Council, but that they have declined to answer a question on the ground that such an answer would be, in their belief, a betrayal of the principle of freedom of thought which we, as British citizens, hold so dear. They do not, I would point out, claim liberty of speech or action. Even granting the desirability of removing women who are conscientious objectors, it would be deplorable that a teacher should be *dismissed without its being established that she is a conscientious objector at all*."

The ground upon which these resignations are asked for has been officially stated to be "Having declined to answer the question as to whether or not they had conscientious objections to military service."

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VOTES FOR WOMEN

27, CHANCERY LANE, W.C.

Telegraphic Address:—Unisuffra. Holb., London
Telephone:—Holborn 5880

MAY, 1917.

OUR HOPES AND OUR CHANCES

During the debate on the Committee stage of the Parliamentary and Elections Bill—by the passing of which the life of the present Parliament has been extended to November 30 next—Mr. Dillon, M.P., raised a doubt as to whether the Government "seriously intend to put through the Reform Bill before we have a General Election." He went on to say:—

> We ought to know, before we decide these questions as to the length of the life of this Parliament, whether the Government mean to declare to the House of Lords and to the House of Commons that the Reform Bill is an essential war measure and must be passed. Everybody knows perfectly well that if the Government took up that attitude the Bill would go through, but at present my impression is that the Bill will not pass, and that the Government have no intention of dealing with it in such a way as to enable it to pass through both Houses.

Mr. Hayes Fisher (Parliamentary Secretary to the Local Government Board), in replying for the Government, said:—

> The Government are thoroughly in earnest regarding the passage of the Reform Bill, and are busily framing that Bill, and hope, as soon as they can find time to frame the Bill, which, of course, is not an easy one to frame, and so soon as the House of Commons can find time to give due attention to that Bill, to present it to the House; but whether the Government will be able to pass that Bill is entirely another matter. The passage of the Bill depends on the good will of the House, and must depend on the good will of the House. That is quite obvious. The Bill itself is framed upon Resolutions that are the results of something in the nature of a compromise on questions which arouse an immense amount of controversy, and unless the Government find the House in the same mood and the same kind of temper in which they found the Conference, and unless these great questions are treated in a practical, business-like way, and in a somewhat short way, so far as discussion is concerned, by the House, it would obviously be impossible, looking to all the other business that the Government must transact in connection with the war, particularly financial business, to force a Bill of that nature, which must be a very large Bill, dealing with many subjects, through the House."—*Parliamentary Debates, April 18, col. 1692.*

Mr. Dillon considered that this statement "merely indicates that if that Bill is met by determined opposition, the Government will make no serious attempt to pass it."

Must it be a Government Measure?

We are glad that the House of Commons is alive to the double danger of there being no Reform Bill at all, and, if there be a Bill, of its being shelved for want of pressure from the Government. The first possibility was to a considerable extent disposed of by Mr. Hayes Fisher. An Electoral Reform Bill is being drafted, and will be presented to the House "so soon as the House of Commons can find time to give due attention to that Bill," which, we take it, will certainly be as soon as the Budget that is being introduced on April 30 has been passed, if not sooner. So far as the second danger is concerned, we should be reluctant to urge uncompromisingly that the Bill must actually be a Government Bill, without being in possession of more data than we have to go upon at present. The argument put forward against this course of action by Mr. Hayes Fisher—who, however, evaded a direct answer on the point—does not seem to us a sufficient one. It is true that the forthcoming Bill is the result of a compromise arrived at by representatives of every shade of opinion in the House of Commons, and to that extent is in its very inception a House of Commons Bill. But whether that is a reason for leaving the House of Commons to get it through all its stages and send it up to the House of Lords without the Government impress upon it of an "essential war measure," must depend upon the extent to which this line of action is likely to influence the opposition to the Bill in both Houses of Parliament; and with regard to this highly important and very complex question we have no definite information, while the Government probably has a great deal.

What The Government Must Do.

We should hesitate, therefore, without more knowledge, to demand that the measure be introduced as a Government measure. But we emphatically look to Mr. Lloyd George to see to it that whatever of Government responsibility must be taken in order to ensure the passage of the Bill through both Houses, *with the Woman Suffrage clauses as an integral part of that Bill*, that responsibility shall be shouldered by him in whatever form may seem wisest to him. The suggestion in the *Times* (April 24) that Woman Suffrage may be left to a free vote of the House of Commons need not perhaps alarm us so far as the Lower House is concerned—in its present mood. But no practical politician can deny that, unless the Government assume full responsibility for this section when the Bill goes up to the House of Lords, the fact that the Government whips were not put on for the Woman Suffrage clauses in the Commons might possibly militate against their retention in the Bill by the Peers; and it is this possibility that we look to Mr. Lloyd George to make impossible of realisation. We do not, however, fail to recognize, at the same time, that a free vote of the People's House in favour of Woman Suffrage should meet the objection of those constitutionalists in both Houses who think the question should first be submitted to the electorate; and that would be a very valuable point gained.

For ourselves, we think there is little risk of the whole Reform Bill being shelved. Opposition may exist to one or another of its clauses, but the salient fact remains that we cannot have a General Election without it that would not be a constitutional outrage. Mr. Asquith declared recently in the House of Commons that by-elections had shown that "not more than between 50 per cent. and 65 per cent. of the electors whose names appear on the register are available for voting purposes," and Mr. Pemberton Billing, M.P., followed this up with the assertion that, owing to the number of out-voters created by war conditions, probably only 25 per cent. of the electorate would be available at any election on the present register. This situation, which we have pointed out again and again in these columns, still remains; it is an intolerable situation, and no Government and no Parliament can continue to ignore it without repudiating such utterances as that contained in Mr. Bonar Law's welcome to America, our new Ally, in the House of Commons on April 18, in the course of which he said:—

> The greatest of all the issues which will be decided in this struggle is whether or not free institutions on which the progress of civilisation and the welfare of mankind depend, can survive against the centralised power of a military despotism. In this connection the entrance of the great Republic is a fitting pendant to the revolution which has brought the Russian people into the circle of the free nations of mankind.

But all these other considerations appear to us to become insignificant before the fact that immeasurably the most important clause of the Electoral Reform Bill will be the one granting to women their share in the government of the people. Let us have no misconception on this point. We do not believe that at a great moment like this, when women and men together are bearing a common burden, facing a common danger, and sharing a common suffering, it can be found possible for the forces of reaction to triumph so far as to extend further rights of citizenship to men while withholding all rights of citizenship from women. We refuse to believe this; and if the incredible should happen and we are proved to have been mistaken, we should prefer to have been mistaken rather than do our countrymen the wrong of having been willing to believe them capable of such baseness. But if the incredible does happen there will be such a Suffrage agitation in the country as will have the effect of proclaiming to the world the hypocrisy of every noble sentiment about liberty that has poured from the lips of our statesmen since the outbreak of the present war.

Quiescent—Not Enthusiastic.

As these words are written, the terms of the proposed Bill are still unpublished. It is pretty widely acknowledged that Suffragists will not wreck or obstruct the measure, supposing that it should not include them on precisely equal terms with men. That is their concession to the abnormal conditions of war-time. But it must not be supposed on that account that they are enthusiastic about the Suffrage proposals of the Speaker's Conference. The exclusion of youth from the electorate, as implied in the age limit mentioned (but not fixed), seems to us a calamity when we reflect on the destruction of youth that this war involves. Of the millions of young men who have marched into battle, immense numbers will have lost their lives; infinitely greater numbers will have lost their youth. The new world to which we all look forward after the war will not be a young world if we exclude from the making of it the youthful material that is at our command. How wise has new Russia shown herself in this respect! The news, conveyed in a telegram to the British branch of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, that women were to be excluded from the "universal" suffrage promised to the Russian people by the Provisional Government, has been fortunately followed by a Reuter message, which appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* on April 18, notifying the resolution of the Workers' Congress at Petrograd (formed of the Councils of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates of All Russia, who have co-operated with the Provisional Government since the beginning of the revolution) to the effect that, with regard to the election of the Constituent Assembly, women shall have the same voting rights as men, and that the qualifying age shall be twenty for both sexes. Thus it appears that the whole people of Russia, men and women, old and young, will have a voice in the construction of their new world.

There is yet time for those who are drafting our own Electoral Reform Bill so to frame it that, in the sense both of the resolution adopted by the Labour Conference on March 20 and of that passed a little previously by the National Council for Adult Suffrage, neither the young industrial woman nor the young widow shall be excluded from a voice in building up the new Great Britain that will have to take her stand, after the war as during it, with the young democracies of Russia and America. We may then be able to say in very truth, as the United States Ambassador said in London on April 12:

"We have set out to help in the enterprise of saving the earth as a place worth living in."

Evelyn Sharp.

THE ROAD OF HUMAN PROGRESS

By Esther Roper

(From a Speech on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill delivered in the Central Hall, Westminster, on April 16, 1917)

The resolution I have to move is:—

> That this meeting organised by Women's Societies denounces the Government for still attempting by the provisions of the Criminal Law Amendment Bill to reintroduce the policy of the discredited Contagious Diseases Acts, and demands the deletion of the new Clause 3, hastily inserted at the last moment, whereby magistrates are empowered to send thoughtless young girls to imprisonment in a reformatory home till the age of eighteen. . . . Further, that since the interests of women can only be safeguarded by women's direct political power, this meeting calls for the immediate enfranchisement of women.

I do not think we have overstated the case in this resolution, because although trickery may not have been intended, to some of us it seems like trickery when, at the last moment in the Committee Stage, this clause is put in, and when even experienced men on the Committee said they had not had time to look up the statutes referred to. Moreover, the clause—applying as it does only to young girls under the age of eighteen, convicted of such offences as "loitering in the streets for the purposes of prostitution," and "any other offence of a like nature"—appeals to me as particularly mean, coming from adult persons. I feel that we have a right to say that we denounce this clause.

Less Punishment for Everybody

Speaking for a very large number of working-women, I should like to add that what we want is not more punishment for men; we want less punishment for everybody. Therefore, do not misunderstand me when I say that I feel it very deeply indeed that a girl of eighteen should be punished in this manner, when a man may do the very same thing to any one of us, any day, and go scot free. I would like to say to you what I say to myself:—Make up your minds before you go any further whether you are prepared to admit that children under the age of eighteen can be guilty of "crimes" and should come under the jurisdiction of the Courts. Personally, I do not think that we have any right to take a young girl and say she is guilty of crime, even if she has done that which constitutes a first offence. I am not exaggerating in saying that such a child is not the person to blame—the person to blame is the society under which that child lives. It has taken from most of these children everything that youth properly desires; it has taken life, gaiety, joy; it has taken harmless fun from most of them. They spend their days in dingy workrooms, working hours that most of us would not like to work; and we apparently desire that they should spend their evenings in mean and overcrowded homes. I sometimes think that we do not realise how little we have got away from the idea of the harem, for we appear to think that the open air and the streets are dangerous for women and girls. It is clear that there is something wrong here. We have got to alter the state of the streets and make them decent; and never under any circumstances should we apply such a word as "prostitute" to a child.

Danger of Police Powers

When penalties, such as those spoken of in this Clause, are suggested for these girls by a Government, I feel as though there were a kind of lust for punishment in the world at the present time. Look at the title of the Bill; it reads—"To make further provision with respect to the punishment of sexual offences." A thing that starts out simply to increase punishment is not likely to arrive at anything good. I have been sitting in police courts for some months now, watching Military Service cases; and I can only say that if I had begun by knowing nothing whatever about this subject I should have been full of horror at the treatment of young girls in London police courts. I may say I was an impartial observer; and I think I have never heard any one of them convicted on anything else but the word of a single policeman. I do not want to say a word against policemen, but it is well known that it is considered good conduct on the part of policemen to get convictions. Couple with that the fact that a man, who wants a girl to do something which she does not want to do, particularly of this nature, is very much tempted by this Clause, if she will not agree, to accuse her of having solicited him when he has been soliciting her.

But I want to go further than that. I have had twenty-five years' experience of the work of young women, as well as older women, in workshops and factories and in ordinary life; and I am quite convinced that there is another class of girl who is going to be immediately and largely affected by this Clause; I mean those perfectly harmless, innocent girls, who are rather noisy when they come out of work. There are hundreds of thousands of these young girls, many of whom have come from their homes at the call of the nation to do work during the war; and these girls spend very long hours in dingy workshops and come out into the streets bursting with energy. They are not very easy to deal with, they are very full of life, and very often guilty of "wandering in the public streets." I should like you to tell me where they can wander! They have as much right to be in the streets as you or I. What is provided for them except the streets? And what is going to prevent their being arrested for loitering in the streets? They are already being followed about by police. News of a case came to me from Manchester, the other day, of noisy, jolly girls going back from work who were followed by police all the way along; and these girls and their mothers were vastly indignant and insulted that this should be done before they had committed any offence, simply because they happened to be noisy. By all means build them clubs and gymnasiums, give them playing fields, give them places where they may learn to sing and dance and act, where they may see something of the beauty of life and art, but for Heaven's sake don't crush the life out of them by the threat of detention homes.

Penitentiaries for Girls!

Is it not a mockery to use the word "home" in such a connection? I do not say that all these homes are not everything that could be desired; but I do know that a great many are not. I had a great friend, a woman doctor, who had had vast experience in a large manufacturing town in England; and I have sat and listened to her stories of what she saw in these "homes" until it has bred in me a kind of feeling that I would have nothing to do with any legislation that would send a girl into one of them. Penitentiaries for girls of sixteen! If you were to tell me that all the adult population ought to be in penitentiaries, because of the state of the world to-day, I should agree with you. We should be there, but not the young who have never had a chance. We are told nothing as to what is to be the nature of these institutions; we are told only that the Home Secretary is to approve of them. Long experience of the Home Office and of other places of the same kind has led me to the conviction that they are much more able to find methods of punishment than means of reform. They do not understand the nature of a remedy; and, after all, why should they? I ask you, do you think that an institution that manages prisons, floggings and executions, should be entrusted with such a task? Girls sent here will be repressed in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred; they will be herded together with other girls who are all accused of the same class of crime; and, as anyone who knows anything about these institutions will admit, the whole tendency of thought and conversation will centre round this one subject. That is a fact of which I could give you plenty of proof. Further, when they come out, they will have a stigma upon them which will never be removed. They will never get on in the industrial world, nor will they ever lift their heads again in the social world.

The Prison Habit

Do you ever think how many people are shut up in camps and prisons and in other places of detention to-day? There are interned aliens and prisoners of war, political offenders in another set, conscientious objectors in another set, peace preachers in another, rebels in another. I fear very much that we are making a prison habit in this country as they have done in Russia in the past, and we are getting into the habit of thinking that if a person does something wrong then he ought to be put away. It is a menace to civilisation to satisfy your mind by shutting up people in prison.

Before I finish, I want to say one word about Woman Suffrage. It would be entirely unnecessary for me to argue with this meeting as to the necessity for women's votes, but I would like to say one word, especially to the younger women here, about the vote when they get it. Do let us see that the women's vote is consciously directed towards the attainment of freedom. And with that I would couple justice and "against force." Seek equality and fair play, not only in the industrial and political worlds, but in the social world; and help men in their efforts to fight against the coercion and conscription that is oppressing them and dogging their footsteps now. In fact, in one word, have done with the old ideas of punishment and force and fear, that have gone far to ruin the world in which we live to-day; and trust, I beseech you, in liberty and human kindness to help us in the difficult walk along the road of human progress.

THE FUND

	£	s.	d.		£	s.	d.
Dr. L. Garrett Anderson	25	0	0	Miss Postlethwaite	1	0	0
The Misses Barrowman	0	5	0	Miss Putnam......	6	0	0
Mrs. Cavendish Bentinck	2	0	0	Mrs. Ratcliffe ...	1	0	0
Miss Bousfield ...	1	1	0	Mrs. Sbarboro ...	0	1	0
Miss Farmer......	0	5	0	Miss Evelyn Sharp	1	1	0
Miss E. M. Griffiths	0	5	0	Miss May Sinclair	1	1	0
Miss G. Harron...	0	2	0	Miss M. Townshend	0	2	6
Miss Jansson......	0	2	0	Mrs. Baillie Weaver	2	0	0
Miss Kirkwood...	0	2	0	Miss Winterne ...	0	2	6
Mrs. Masters......	0	2	0	Miss Yarwood ...	0	2	0
Miss Oldrini	0	18	0				
Mr. R. Pott	1	0	0	Total......	43	7	0

UNITED SUFFRAGISTS

27, Chancery Lane, London, W.C. 2. Telephone, Holborn 5880

THE CAMPAIGN

Saturday, April 28; 3 p.m.—Drawing-room Meeting.—13, Temple Fortune Court, N.W. Speakers: Mrs. Pickett and Miss Evelyn Sharp.

Sunday, April 29; 3 p.m.—Open Air Meeting.—Hyde Park. Speakers: Miss Somers, Mr. P. C. Darby.

Tuesday, May 1; 8 p.m.—Open Meeting.—U.S. Women's Club, 92, Borough Road, S.E. Speaker: Miss Evelyn Sharp.

Monday, May 7; 7 p.m.—Conversational Evening.—Corporation Chambers, Bolton. Light refreshments, collection.

Tuesday, May 8; 8 p.m.—Open Meeting.—U.S. Women's Club, 92, Borough Road, S.E. Speaker: Dr. R. W. Chambers.

Tuesday, May 8; 7.45 p.m.—Members' Meeting.—13, Suffolk Street, Birmingham.

Sunday, May 13; 3 p.m.—Open Air Meeting.—Hyde Park. Speakers: Mrs. Gregory, Mrs. Ayrton Gould.

FRIDAY, MAY 11; 8 P.M.—U.S. PUBLIC MEETING.—SMALL ESSEX HALL. SPEAKERS: MRS. PETHICK LAWRENCE, MR. LAURENCE HOUSMAN (CHAIR). ADMISSION FREE.

Tuesday, May 15; 8 p.m.—Open Meeting.—U.S. Women's Club. Speaker: Mr. John Scurr.

Tuesday, May 22; 8 p.m.—Open Meeting.—U.S. Women's Club. Speaker: Dr. Ettie Sayer.

Sunday, May 27; 3 p.m.—Open Air Meeting.—Hyde Park. Speakers: Mrs. Gregory, Miss D. Pethick, Miss Wertheim.

ESSEX HALL MEETINGS

The meeting held on March 30, after we last went to press, was full of interest. Miss Alison Neilans (Secretary of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene) made an able speech on the subject of the present state of our streets, full of useful facts, coupled with constructive suggestions for reform. A useful discussion followed, in which many of those present, both men and women, took part.

Another very interesting meeting took place on April 20, when Mr. Laurence Housman spoke on "Things that belong to Peace." His points were warmly applauded, and a long discussion was carried on at the end of his speech. Miss Evelyn Sharp dealt with the Franchise situation in the unavoidable absence of Mrs. May Whitty Webster.

Mrs. Pethick Lawrence—May 11

The next meeting in the small Essex Hall will take place on Friday evening, May 11, at 8 p.m., when Mr. Laurence Housman will take the Chair and Mrs. Pethick Lawrence will speak on "The Failure of Repression." All members and friends of the United Suffragists are asked to help in working up this meeting, as it is important, apart from the interest of the speeches and their influence on as wide a circle as possible, that every Suffrage meeting should be well filled during the present crisis. Handbills and particulars can be obtained from Miss Brewster at 27, Chancery Lane, W.C. 2.

CLUB COUNCIL MEETING

The Club Council Meeting, held at 92, Borough Road, on Tuesday evening, April 3, was a great success. The members turned up in full force, and a good number of the helpers were also present. Miss Evelyn Sharp took the Chair (though there was no space in the crowded room for a chair!), and a first-rate discussion took place, in which suggestions were made, debated, and voted upon by members and helpers alike. The following proposals were all carried unanimously, subject to its being found practicable to carry them out:—

(1) That a demonstration of economical war cookery should, if possible, be arranged on one evening of the week.

(2) That members should be invited to bring their children on every afternoon (instead of on two afternoons only, as was previously arranged).

(3) That a children's boot club should be started if a sufficient number of purchasers could be guaranteed.

(4) That members should have the right of bringing visitors to the Club concerts on payment of 2d. per visitor.

(5) That short stories should be substituted for the novel in the weekly reading aloud.

(6) That swimming and acting (scenes from one of Shakespeare's plays) should be arranged, if possible, for the girls.

(7) That a Penny Savings Bank should be started in connection with the Summer Outing.

OPEN AIR CAMPAIGN

Organiser: Mrs. Gregory, 6, Gibson's Hill, Norwood, S.W.

No open-air campaign could flourish in such weather as that of last month. However, the Hyde Park meetings were held in spite of it; and the one on Sunday, April 15, was a particularly successful one, many questions being asked by members of an audience that was held for an hour and a half. For May meetings, see campaign list.

U.S. WOMEN'S CLUB

92, Borough Road, S.E.

Secretary: Miss V. Aitken. Tel.: Hop 4172

The Club, after the short break necessitated by the Easter holiday, has resumed its normal activities. The chief event of the past month was the Club Council Meeting, which was largely attended by both members and helpers, and at which many points concerning the welfare of the Club were eagerly discussed, and suggestions voted upon. (See above.) Thanks are due to Miss Young, Miss Brown, Miss Bensusan, and Mr. Threadgold for their excellent concerts; also to Mrs. Ben Webster and Miss Netta Syrett for their interesting lectures. We would also thank Miss Crawford, Miss Bergman, and Miss Young for their gifts of parcels for the coming Jumble Sale, and Mrs. McCall for 10s.

BIRMINGHAM U.S.

Hon. Sec.: Miss Julia Green, 13, Suffolk Street

A members' meeting will be held at the Office on Tuesday, May the 8th, at 7.45 p.m. During the summer the Office will, it is hoped, be open at the usual hours, but they are liable to alteration without notice. **Members' help in Office minding is badly needed.**

BOLTON U.S.

Hon. Sec.: Miss S. W. Holden, 110, Tottington Road, Harwood

On April 3 our members attended a meeting of the Women Textile Workers' Representation Society, when Miss McNeill gave a thoughtful address on "The Necessity for a Revolution in Education." A resolution, protesting against the clause recently introduced into the Criminal Law Amendment Bill which provides for the detention in some institution of girls under 18 who might be arrested for soliciting, loitering, &c., was passed unanimously. Miss Reddish explained the clause, which she strongly condemned, and once more insisted on the urgency of votes for women.

HAMPSTEAD AND GOLDER'S GREEN U.S.

Hon. Secretary: Miss Daisy Solomon, 64, Pattison Road, N.W.

A successful public meeting was held on Tuesday, March 27, at the Library, Prince Arthur Road. Mrs. Arncliffe Sennett very kindly spoke in place of Mrs. Pethick Lawrence, who was unavoidably detained in Scotland, and delighted the audience with a racy and interesting speech. Mr. Holford Knight, who is a recent convert to Woman Suffrage, and has urged the admission of women to the legal profession, was listened to with much interest. Mr. Sadd Brown kindly took the Chair. The following Societies co-operated with us: The Women's Franchise Society (Hendon), The Church League for Woman Suffrage (Hampstead and Golders Green Branch), The Free Church League for W.S. (Hampstead Branch), Mrs. Raymond Unwin (Friends' League for W.S.). The following resolution was passed unanimously and forwarded to the Prime Minister and Mr Asquith: "That this meeting, encouraged by Russia's Great Charter of Freedom, heartily supports Mr. Asquith's resolution calling for a Reform Bill on the general lines of the Speaker's Conference, and urges the inclusion of women on the widest possible basis." The annual Members' Meeting was held prior to the public meeting, when the Committee was elected and the Report adopted.

LETCHWORTH U.S.

Hon. Sec.: Miss Ruth Pym, 2, Meadow Way Green

On April 6, delegates from a Joint Committee of Suffrage and other societies in Letchworth went on a Suffrage Deputation to Lord Robert Cecil. The United Suffragists were represented by their Secretary. In answer to questions as to the Women's Suffrage Clause in the Electoral Reform Bill, Lord Robert Cecil expressed great hopes of its being passed into law. He advised the support of the suggestions of the Parliamentary Committee as a whole, although he did not consider all of them satisfactory; and expressed his whole-hearted determination to get the Bill passed if possible.

HENDON WOMEN'S FRANCHISE SOCIETY

(Affiliated to United Suffragists)

Hon. Sec.: Mrs. McCabe, 49, Bridge Lane, Hendon, N.W.

At a business meeting held on March 30 it was decided that, in view of the fact that so many important public meetings for Women's Suffrage were being held, we would not have our usual drawing-room meetings during April.

Many of our members also belong to the Women's Local Government Society, Hendon, which Society is holding its annual meeting this month, when important business, relating to the Maternity Centres and Day Nursery schemes, in which it has been actively engaged for the last two years, will be discussed. It is hoped that all members will make a special effort to attend. We hope, too, to join actively in the arrangement of a local public suffrage meeting with other Societies of the district.

WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE GREAT WAR FOR WOMEN'S FREEDOM?

Women may, or they may not, be going to win their freedom within the course of the next two or three months. In either case, every woman should now be doing her "bit" in the fight.

If you have done all you could to bring about the political enfranchisement of women, you need not read the rest of this paragraph. If, on the contrary, you feel that you have allowed others to do most of the fighting for *your* Vote, there is still time for you to come in and do your share at the last.

Here is one thing you can do:—

JOIN THE UNITED SUFFRAGISTS

A Society of men and women that exists to sweep away existing electoral anomalies and secure a vote for every man and every woman. Fill in the membership card below, and send it with 1s. (or more) to the Hon. Secretary at 27, Chancery Lane, W.C. 2.

This is a very small thing to do, so do it!

Here is another thing you can do:—

SUBSCRIBE TO "VOTES FOR WOMEN"

A monthly paper that exists to bring about the above ends, and also for the dissemination of news—political, social, and industrial—of the women's movement.

Fill in the form you will find on the back page of this issue, and despatch it (with 2s. or 1s., as the case may be) to the Publishers, VOTES FOR WOMEN, 27, Chancery Lane, London, W.C.2, *without delay.*

MEMBERSHIP FORM

UNITED SUFFRAGISTS

27, Chancery Lane, London, W.C.

OBJECT

To secure a Government measure to remove existing electoral anomalies and give votes to all women and all men.

The minimum subscription is a shilling a year. Members are relied upon to support the Society to the best of their ability.

NAME (Mr., Mrs., Miss) ________________________
(Please write clearly)

ADDRESS ________________________

____

____

This form, when filled in, should be sent with membership fee to the Hon. Secretary, United Suffragists, at the above address.

COMPARISON OF PUNISHMENTS

LIGHT SENTENCES

Assault on a Girl

The *Western Daily Mercury* (April 7) reports case of a private charged at Plymouth Quarter Sessions before the Recorder, Mr. J. A. Hawke, K.C., with indecent assault upon a girl of 18. The jury found him guilty of common assault.

Sentence:—*Three months in the second division.*

Attempted Murder

The *Times* (April 13) reports case of a pugilist charged before Mr. Leycester at Thames Police Court with attempting to strangle his wife.

Sentence:—*Two months' imprisonment.*

HEAVY SENTENCES

Housebreaking

The *Western Daily Mercury* (April 7) reports case of a seaman in the Royal Navy, charged at Plymouth Quarter Sessions before the Recorder with breaking into two houses and stealing articles and money to the amount of £2 5s. and £1 11s. 9d. respectively. There were previous convictions.

Sentence:—*Ten months' hard labour for each offence, to run concurrently.*

Robbery

The *Essex* (?) *Record* (April 8) reports case of a baker aged 65, charged at Nottingham with stealing 6s. 9d. from the poor-box. There were previous convictions.

Sentence: *Three years' penal servitude:*

THE JURY AT FAULT

The finding of the jury in the Plymouth case of assault, recorded above, lends some colour to the theory that, until women are allowed to sit on juries, summary jurisdiction may possibly result in a fairer verdict than sending such cases as these to a higher Court. In this particular instance, the Recorder does seem to have been more anxious than is commonly the case to treat an assault upon a girl as a more serious offence than that of housebreaking and robbery. The newspaper report states that "in his opinion the prisoner might have been indicted for something much more serious than that for which he had been indicted, though he assumed the jury would have found him not guilty, as now they had done, on the charge of indecent assault." After reading the evidence, we decidedly agree with the Judge's estimate of this very bad case, and a correspondent, who was present in Court, writes to say—"As I heard the case, I can assure you I found their verdict incredible."

This being so, we regret very much that the Judge should have proceeded, on the assumption that the man was intoxicated at the time, to pass a sentence even less severe than he might have done on the finding of the jury. In the same Court, the same Judge gave a sentence more than three times as long to a burglar, of whom it was also said that drink had brought him to his present pass. We must, however, admit that at Nottingham (according to the case cited underneath the one in question) ten months' hard labour might well have been three years' penal servitude or more; so it is fair to conclude that Mr. Hawke, K.C., was, as we began by saying, chiefly influenced by the action of the jury in judging the two crimes with which he had to deal.

A Just Sentence

While we are on this subject it is worth recording that in a still more serious case of assault, another Judge, unhampered by any adverse verdict of the jury, was able to show his appreciation of the gravity of such offences by sending the offender, an artificer, to penal servitude for three years. At the Cornwall Assizes, Mr. Justice Bray recently had before him this very terrible case of assault upon a little girl of 7, as a result of which the child has been afflicted with a horrible disease. "I should not do my duty," said the Judge in passing sentence, "unless I passed a severe sentence." We need not remind our readers that we are not advocates of severe sentences, as such, and that we think these crimes will only cease when the whole position of the sexes has been revised, and the subjection of women exists no longer. But meanwhile, public opinion will undoubtedly be educated in this direction if judges insist upon showing their sense of the gravity of sexual crime by imposing longer sentences upon such offenders than upon the burglar and the pickpocket.

MAGISTRATES AND THE STATE OF OUR STREETS

To read the newspaper reports of certain proceedings in police courts today is enough to induce the belief that the unsatisfactory state of some of our streets in war time is brought about entirely by young girls. It is young girls who are haled before the magistrates and charged with "disorderly behaviour"; it is young girls, who are stated in the open Court to be suffering from venereal disease—under what law we do not know, since medical practitioners are forbidden under the law of libel to make similar statements about their private patients—it is young girls who are lectured by magistrates and sent to prison, sometimes for as long as six months. These police-court proceedings, as reported, would lead one to suppose that (1) If there are any men in the streets at all, they are a strange unearthly compound of saint and fool; (2) That "riotous" girls in their teens are all naturally vicious and always take the initiative in inviting men to go astray; and (3) That these girls have a strange capacity for generating venereal disease.

Here are two recent cases that illustrate the point of view we condemn.

"A Typical Case"

Under this heading the *Times* (April 13) reports the case of a girl of 18, who had been placed under Court supervision, and was charged before Mr. Horace Smith at Westminster Police Court with "resumed disorderly street behaviour." The report proceeds:—

"The Court missionary said it was a typical case. For necessary reasons the girl was sent to the infirmary and afterwards to a hospital to be treated at considerable expense. She was ordered to report afterwards, but she took her discharge and immediately resumed her old mode of life. She was now in the same terrible condition as she was when originally charged."

What is the effect produced upon the reader's mind after perusing this account? Surely one of pity and indignation—pity at the tragic condition of the girl's health, indignation at the state of our social system, which forces her to appear alone in the dock to answer for "behaviour" that at least implies the collaboration of one man, if not of many men! This, however, does not appear to have been the effect produced upon the magistrate's mind. The report ends thus:—"Mr. Horace Smith sent the girl to prison for six months in default of her finding heavy sureties."

Where are the Four Men?

Our second instance is taken from the *Western Daily Mercury* (April 10), which reports the case of two girls charged at Torpoint Police Court, before Messrs. J. H. Wiltshire and W. Rose, with "behaving in a riotous manner in Macey Street, Torpoint," to which they pleaded guilty. The report continues:—

"Inspector Broad stated that with P.C. Rickard he was concealed in Macey Street the previous night about 11 o'clock, when the prisoners with three soldiers and a naval man came into Macey Street, having come from Devonport. *They all stopped by the Wesleyan schools and conducted themselves in a disgraceful manner.*

"The Chairman, in passing sentence, said the Bench were determined to stamp such a thing out in Torpoint, and sentenced each to a month's hard labour.

"This was the maximum punishment." (The italics are ours.)

From this we gather that behaving in a "riotous" or "disgraceful" manner is a crime that is punishable by the maximum sentence (which, by the way, seems to vary according to the particular old musty Statute that is revived for the express purpose of penalising women) when women are charged with it by the police, but is apparently not an offence at all when indulged in by men companions, who are not even produced as witnesses.

The Only Way.

We have no wish to minimise the difficulties of a situation produced to a large extent by the unnatural conditions of war time. But we maintain that these difficulties will be accentuated, not overcome, by a Police Court procedure which is based on the inequality of the sexes, and seeks to grapple with a big human problem by denying instead of granting liberty. We refer our readers to the article on page 261, taken from Miss Esther Roper's speech on this subject, delivered at the meeting on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill convened in London by the Women's Freedom League on April 16.

"DEFENCELESS ADAMS"

Colonel Sir Edward Ward, who alluded in a speech at the Union Jack Club to the alleged state of Waterloo Road at night, referred to "Eve, who was the temptress there," and went on to say that "if these modern Eves were kept off the streets" we should not have "those painful legends of the fall of the defenceless Adams."

We can only say that if the men of the country can be correctly described as "defenceless Adams" when confronted with schoolgirls, it is high time that responsible women were entrusted with the serious business of the government of the country, including both the making of the law and its administration.

LECTURES ON RUSSIA

A series of ten lectures on "Russia; or, the Struggle and the Victory of the Soul of a Nation," are being delivered on Monday afternoons, at 3 p.m., at the Minerva Café, 144, High Holborn, W.C., the first of which took place on April 16. The lecturer is Miss Margaret Hodge, well-known to readers of this paper; and the fee for the course is 5s., for single lectures, 1s. Tickets and syllabus may be obtained at the above address.

THE PRESS AND THE SUFFRAGE SITUATION

The Nation (March 31)

It is not merely a modified structure of economic life to which, by an obvious act of justice and even of State necessity, women must contribute; it is to the re-building of society on fresh lines of liberty secured by broader foundations of truth. That is the task, not of a sex, but of humanity. . . . The unenfranchised woman came in to hold up the hands of the nation in war. And the first woman's vote may quite conceivably be a vote on peace. A new political order begins, inspired by fresh ideas and springing from an almost unused tap-root of experience, and if it does not at once make all things new, it illumines the hope of social justice, and throws out a signal of defeat to the now prevailing kingdom of violence.

Sunday Chronicle (April 1)

Soldiers, sailors, and women have won their votes. And National Service from all logically carries with it National Government by all. The people are in future going to govern themselves.

Truth (April 4)

Whatever happens to electoral reform, we are pretty certain to see very big democratic movements in the next ten or twenty years. On that view of the situation, the proposed age qualification for women voters is as unnecessary as it is ungracious.

Lady's Pictorial (April 7)

This is no time for half measures. There must be no niggling or hedging or evasion. . . . Therefore, when the moment of decision upon votes for women arrives, we sincerely trust that the Suffrage will be given freely and unreservedly, without let or hindrance. This war has surely broken down all sex barriers.

Morning Post (April 2)

We have snatched an hour from the "supreme and sole purpose" of the war to follow out Mr. Asquith's adventures with woman suffrage, and we are bound to say that never since the story of Don Juan was written has there been such a shocking record.

Daily Express (April 12)

The question of woman suffrage is no longer worth arguing about. By the common consent of the great mass of the nation the women have earned the franchise as a man earns his medal, sometimes by the vote of his company. The joint labours and cruelties of war experienced in the munition shops and hospitals have washed away the reluctance of men to entrust women with such a little thing as a vote. We have trusted them with our lives, and a life is more valuable than a vote.

Sunday Chronicle (April 1)

As I turned into a suburban road the other day I saw a group of young men (exempted, I suppose) watching a dog-fight. There was a young woman just ahead of me. She dashed into the road, and fearlessly separated the belligerents.

The dogs ran off in different directions, and a policeman came up. "All over, boys," he observed to the audience; "pass on."

Then to me he remarked, "I have noticed that as a rule when there's a dog-fight, men look on and women try to stop it. That's why I'm in favour of votes for women. If all the women in the world had votes, there would be no more war."

Punch (April 18)

The question of Parliamentary reform has been under discussion in the House of Commons. That the Legislature should attempt to deal with reforms of any kind that have not been previously demanded by the daily Press is regarded in certain quarters as a most dangerous precedent.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

WOMEN'S FREEDOM LEAGUE, 144, High Holborn, W.C. Public Meetings Caxton Hall, Westminster, S.W. (St. James' Park Station, District Railway), every Wednesday Afternoon at 3 o'clock. Speakers: May 2—Miss Lind-af-Hageby, "Women's Part in Promoting Moral Hygiene." Mrs. Despard. May 9—Dr. Armstrong Smith, "How Some Ideals in Education Work out in Practice." May 16—Mr. Laurence Housman, "Peaceful Slumbering." May 23—The Rev. W. Major Scott, "The Upward Thrust." Mrs. Despard. Admission free. Tea, 4.30 (6d.). Read "The Vote," One Penny, Weekly.

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